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MIDWINTER WEATHER

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A radio talk by J. B. Kincer, Weather Bureau, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period, National Farm and Home Hour, Wednesday, February 14, 1934.

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If I were to ask you to classify this winter, that is whether you consider it a mild or a severe winter, what would you say? Your answer would depend entirely on where you happen to live. If in the northeastern United States, say New England, or New York, you would say it's a "humdinger". If in the Northwest, or for that matter anywhere in the western half of the country, you would say, fine, mild and open-- just like spring.

January was mild in nearly all sections of the Country, but since the first of February we have had some very great contrasts in temperature--in fact some of the greatest of history. You folks who live in the more favored sections doubtless have been reading about the severe weather in the East and Northeast. And was it cold? On February 6 the weather map showed an extensive high pressure area in the region of the Hudson Bad in Canada, and during the following few days this moved, or settled, down over the Great Lakes and Northeastern States, bringing the extremely low temperatures.

On the morning of February 8, White River, Ont., reported a minimum temperature of 52° below zero, and Doucet, Que., 58° below. By the following morning intense cold had overspread New England, New York, the eastern Lake region, upper Ohio Valley, and Middle Atlantic States. A number of stations reported the lowest temperature of record, and others the lowest ever experienced in February. Among the stations establishing new "lows" were Boston, 18° below zero; Buffalo, N. Y., 20° below; Ithaca, N.Y., 24° below; Scranton, Pa., 20° below; Hartford, Conn., and New York City, each with 14° below, and Philadelphia and Atlantic City, with 10° to 8° below, respectively. Here in Washington, we had a minimum of 6° below zero, which was the coldest since 1912, and was the first subzero temperature the Capital has experienced since 1918. The line of zero extended well into southern Virginia, Lynchburg reporting 4° below.

However, the extreme cold was confined to the northeastern United States, with abnormally warm weather persisting in the Northwest. With many northeastern localities experiencing the lowest temperatures ever known, and zero weather prevailing to southern Virginia, the lowest reported from first-order stations in the Northwest was only slightly below freezing.

In the South, the line of freezing temperature barely reached the east Gulf coast, and farther west freezing was not experienced at any time during last week as far south as Vicksburg, Miss., nor south of extreme northern Louisiana and the northern districts of Texas. The lowest temperature reported for Miami, Fla., was 50° and at Brownsville, Tex., 46° .

Temperature conditions during the past week afford a good example of the extremes that can obtain for a considerable period of time in comparatively nearby sections. The Northeastern States had one of the coldest weeks of

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record, with the average temperature ranging from 15° to 20° below normal, and at the same time a large northwestern area, in approximately the same latitude, had one of the warmest winter weeks ever known, with the weekly means ranging from 15° to 27° above normal. The average temperature for the week at Miles City, Montana, was about the same as the normal at Nashville, Tenn. In other words, you folks in Miles City spent last week, climatologically, in sunny Tennessee.

In the East recent severe temperatures did considerable damage in the area from the central Lake region, upper Ohio Valley, and southern Appalachian Mountains eastward. In the more northern sections much harm resulted from frozen water pipes, while from southern Virginia southward truck and grain crops were again rather severely affected. These had suffered more or less hard from the preceding cold wave around the first of February, and, while some recovery had been noted, the second freeze, coming about ten days later, caused additional destruction. From southeastern Virginia southward to Georgia and northern Florida, winter crops suffered rather severely, though later precipitation in Florida and some other south Atlantic areas was helpful. In practically all of the Eastern States outside operations were largely at a standstill.

West of the Mississippi River, and extending to the Pacific coast, the weather, in general, has been favorable, except for continued dryness over large areas. Seasonal farm work, as a rule, has made good progress, with some spring oats put in and early gardens planted as far north as Oklahoma and Arkansas. In fact, some soil working was done almost to the Canadian border. Zero temperatures in southern Virginia, and at the same time open field work, such as harrowing and disking, in Montana would suggest that the weather gods in some way have gotten their wires crossed.

The soil moisture situation has improved somewhat, but not to a marked degree. Precipitation, principally snow, has been helpful over the Southwestern Plains, especially in western Kansas, and in the Middle Rocky Mountains and central Great Basin areas as far west as northern Nevada. This has afforded temporary relief and improved the stock water situation, but more generous precipitation is needed. Soils in the south Atlantic area are also temporarily in better shape because of the rains of the week. However, a large central area, comprising practically all of the Ohio, the central and upper Mississippi and the Missouri River Valleys, is still badly needing moisture, which is also true of the far Southwest Texas westward. The Pacific area continues in good shape, except that moisture is needed in southern California.